DATELINE #110: WASHINGTON, D.C. SEPTEMBER 8, 1976
ALINA ZERANSKI

OLDER AMERICANS ACTION VOLUNTEERS
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE CAPITAL OF THE UNITED STATES -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY ALINA ZERANSKI ON A VISIT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE PUTTING INTO ACTION ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST VALUABLE RESOURCES.

NARR: ONLY A FEW MONTHS AFTER RETIREMENT, HELEN O'ROARKE FOUND HERSELF BORED, STAGNATING, DEPRESSED. NOW, SHE HAS SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO EACH DAY: HER REGULAR VISITS TO SEVERAL DISABLED ELDERLY PERSONS LIVING ALONE.

MARK HOPKINS -- A RETIRED CARPENTER, 84 YEARS OF AGE -- STARTED WALKING A MILE A DAY EACH WAY TO TEACH FOURTH GRADERS HOW TO MAKE THINGS OUT OF WOOD. NOW HIS HEALTH HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY. THESE ARE TWO OF THE MANY OLDER AMERICANS WHO VOLUNTEER THEIR SERVICES AND FEEL THAT THEY ARE GETTING EVEN MORE OUT OF IT THAN THE PEOPLE THEY ARE SERVING.

THEY ARE PART OF A PROGRAM ORGANIZED BY A SMALL AGENCY OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT CALLED "ACTION," WITH HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C., JUST ACROSS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE. ACTION IS BEST KNOWN FOR ITS INTERNATIONAL ARM, THE PEACE CORPS, BUT IT ALSO SPONSORS MANY DOMESTIC PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG AND OLD, AND ENCOURAGES VOLUNTEER EFFORTS TO MEET A VARIETY OF SOCIAL NEEDS.

NARR: (CONT'D) JACK KANYON IS DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS FOR THE OLDER AMERICANS VOLUNTEER ACTION PROGRAM.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- KANYON

"THIS PARTICULAR OFFICE IN WHICH I'M LOCATED, THE OLDER AMERICANS VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS OFFICE, HAS RSVP -- THE RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM, WHICH IS AVAILABLE TO ALL PERSONS, SIXTY YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER, WHO WANT TO DO SOMETHING TO MAKE THEIR LIVES MORE INTERESTING. IT MAY BE A MATTER OF FINDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO PERFORM SOME COMMUNITY SERVICE, BUT IT USUALLY IS BOTH."

NARR: RETIRED VOLUNTEERS WORK IN LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, AIRPORTS, INFORMATION CENTERS OR THEY MAY OFFER REASSURANCE BY TELEPHONE TO LONELY AND DISABLED PERSONS. THEIR SERVICES ARE MEANINGFUL AND VALUABLE. BUT THIS IS CONSIDERED JUST AN EXTRA, A PLUS RESULTING FROM GUIDING RETIRED PEOPLE TO A LIFE WITH DIGNITY.

THERE ARE ABOUT 660 PROJECTS FOR THE ELDERLY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, INVOLVING 191,000 VOLUNTEERS. IT ALL STARTED FIFTEEN YEARS AGO ON A COST SHARING BASIS WITH ACTION PROVIDING THE GRANTS TO PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT PRIVATE AGENCIES INITIATING AND OPERATING SUCH LOCAL PROJECTS.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- KANYON

"I WENT TO THE HOME OF AN ELDERLY COUPLE...I WENT WITH A GENTLEMAN VISITING THIS ELDERLY COUPLE. THE HUSBAND WAS IN RELATIVELY GOOD HEALTH, WHICH WAS VERY FORTUNATE BECAUSE HIS WIFE WAS A COMPLETE INVALID. HER MENTAL CONDITION WAS FAR FROM BRIGHT. IT WAS JUST A VERY SAD SITUATION. HERE WAS THIS HUSBAND WHO WAS DEVOTING HIS WHOLE LIFE TO THE CARE OF HIS WIFE. HE WAS CONCERNED THAT DAY BECAUSE HE HAD GOTTEN THE MISTAKEN IDEA FROM A PRIEST THAT THE PRIEST WANTED TO INSTITUTIONALIZE HIS WIFE. THE VOLUNTEER HAD CONVINCED THE HUSBAND THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE AND THAT EVERYTHING WAS REALLY GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT. AND IN THIS CASE, HE PERFORMED AN ABSOLUTELY INVALUABLE SERVICE. I WAS SO MOVED AND PLEASED WHEN AS I WAS GETTING READY TO DEPART, THE HUSBAND SAID TO ME - THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR COMING...AND HE AGAIN SAID - COME

TAPE: (CONT'D) BACK, COME BACK ANY TIME! TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING! ANY TIME! - AND THIS SO STRUCK ME WITH HOW LONELY, A PERSON CAN GET AND REMINDED ME AGAIN OF THE GREAT SERVICE THAT THIS VOLUNTEER SENIOR COMPANION WAS DOING SIMPLY BY BEING THERE AND SHARING SOME OF HIS TIME."

NARR: ACTION ALSO RUNS A SENIOR COMPANION AND FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAMS. THESE ARE MAINLY FOR LOW INCOME RETIRED PEOPLE. FOSTER GRANDPARENTS OFFER LOVE, CARE AND ATTENTION TO CHILDREN WHO ARE PHYSICALLY OR PSYCHOLOGICALLY HANDICAPPED OR TO YOUTHS DETAINED IN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS. THE 10 YEAR OLD FOSTER GRANDPARENTS PROGRAM WAS SO SUCCESSFUL THAT TWO YEARS AGO THE SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM WAS STARTED TO SERVE OTHER OLDER ADULTS WITH SCHEDULED VISITS TO THEM IN INSTITUTIONS, HOSPITALS OR IN THEIR HOMES. THESE VOLUNTEERS SERVE ON A REGULAR SCHEDULE, TWENTY HOURS A WEEK. THEY RECEIVE ABOUT 32 DOLLARS A WEEK TO COVER TRANSPORTATION, SOME MEALS OR EXTRA CLOTHING.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- KANYON

"THE PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED FOR THAT GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO WE MIGHT HAVE LOOKED ON AS A PROBLEM IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT PAST. NOW, WE ARE LOOKING ON OLDER AMERICANS... MORE AS A RESOURCE THAN A PROBLEM. AND THOSE OLDER PEOPLE ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE AWARE THAT THEY ARE NEEDED AND WANTED, AND THIS IS DOING GREAT THINGS FOR THEM. WE FOUND IN SURVEYS THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THESE VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES GO TO THE DOCTOR LESS FREQUENTLY...THEY ARE HAPPIER. IT HAS CONTRIBUTED A VERY GREAT DEAL TO THEIR FEELING OF SELF WORTH AND SELF ESTEEM, BECAUSE THEY HAVE GOTTEN BACK INTO THE ACTIVE LIFE OF THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THEY ARE NOW GIVING."

NARR: SENIOR COMPANIONS USUALLY HAVE EIGHT TO TEN PERSONS THEY VISIT REGULARLY. DEPENDING ON THE NEED, THEY MAY VISIT SOME OF THEM THREE OR FOUR TIMES A WEEK, HELPING WITH THE HOUSE WORK AND MEALS; OTHERS MAYBE TWICE A WEEK, TAKING THEM SHOPPING; STILL OTHERS ONLY ONCE EVERY OTHER

NARR: (CONT'D) WEEK JUST TO CHAT. STATISTICS PROVE THAT THIS SERVICE CAN PREVENT OR DELAY THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A NUMBER OF DISABLED PERSONS. SENIOR VOLUNTEERS HELP THEM OUT, BY OFFERING TWO ITEMS WHICH CAN'T BE BOUGHT AT ANY PRICE-COMPANIONSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE CAPITAL OF THE UNITED STATES BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, YOU HEARD ABOUT THE OLDER AMERICANS VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS. NEXT _____ ANOTHER DATELINE.

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